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18

THE SEXUAL ASPECT OF THE *LIṄGA* CULT ACCORDING TO THE SAIDDHĀNTIKA SCRIPTURES*

by Hélène Brunner

53

1. Introduction

It may be for some a matter of surprise to read the title of my paper, where sex is associated with the one Śaiva school which is reputed for its discretion regarding this matter. Actually, I am not going to turn upside down our knowledge of Siddhānta and reveal such things as the existence of sexual practices by the adherents of this school as a form of their regular *sādhana*: such practices are not totally unknown, but they are described by a minority of texts[1], are enjoined for special occasions only, and therefore may conveniently be overlooked. But I want to insist on two facts which are too often either ignored or vehemently denied: first, the phallic nature of the *liṅga* used for the *pūjā*; second, the aspects of its cult which fully sustain this conception, revealing that the *liṅga* is seen not merely as a phallus but as one that is active.

My sources will be taken from the Saiddhāntika scriptures

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* This article reproduces, in a slightly extended form, a talk which I gave in Vienna in September 1995 during a conference on "Tantrism" organized by Prof. Gerhard Oberhammer, and that I repeated in Lausanne in February 1996, in French and in a different form, on the invitation of Prof. Johannes Bronkhorst. I have incorporated in the written version some reflections born fom the remarks made by the audience on both occasions; but I have not tried to remove either the oral style or details which reveal the context in which the paper was first conceived. The polishing of the English, as well as some corrections and additions, are due to the kindness of Professor Alexis Sanderson, whom I thank here heartily.

[1] One instance is the observance (*asidhārāvrata*) described in *Mataṅgapārameśvarāgama, kriyāpāda* 11.41-53: analysis in A. Sanderson, *Bull. of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XLVIII, [pp. 564-8], p. 565, col. 2. In the same passage, A. Sanderson mentions other Saiddhāntika scriptures that have similar injunctions; and he will adduce further instances in a work to come.

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(henceforth Āgamas)[2] and from treatises of the same school. To deal with the first point, which is the less controversial, all the Āgamas and *paddhatis* may help. But insofar as the ritual is concerned, not all texts have descriptions or statements clear enough for my purpose. Inded there are almost none in those of the edited Āgamas, the majority, which are not ancient. Of the available handbooks, I shall rely mainly on Somaśambhu's, a work of the eleventh century, which has not lost touch with the concepts and practices of the early tradition[3], and in one case on Īśānaśivagurudeva's, a later work; but often I shall have to call to help some unpublished *paddhatis* – none of this material being later than the thirteenth century.

Let me now take up in succession the two points I have announced.

2. The icon called *liṅga* stands for the phallus of Śiva

It would seem that such a statement does not require demonstration. The word *liṅga* means phallus, and this is enough.

Yes, but *liṅga* is also used in logic with the meaning "sign" – any sign whatever. So that several scholars prefer to retain this meaning alone, even for the concrete image of Śiva: the *liṅga* in the temple, they say, is only the "sign" of the God, and has nothing to do with His *membrum virile*. Or, taking into account the meaning "subtle" that is also attached to the word, one would say that it is «the first "sign" or evolute of the essence of Śiva, in subtle form or matter»[4]. Others rely on the Purāṇas, where it is ex-

[2] Citations from Āgamas without bibliographical details are from the editions of N. R. Bhatt (*Publications de l'Institut Français d'Indologie*, Pondichéry).

[3] I shall often refer to my translation of *Somaśambhupaddhati*, Publications de l'Institut Français d'Indologie No 25, Pondichéry (three vol. published: *SP1*, *SP2*, *SP3* and one in the press,*SP4*), especially to *SP4*, which deals with *pratiṣṭhā*.

[4] Doris M. Srinivasam, "Pre-Kuṣāṇa Śaivite Iconography", in *Discourses on Śiva*, edited by Michael W. Meister, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1984 [,pp. 32-46], p. 40. This author cannot but recognize the phallic symbolism of the cultic image (ibid., p. 41), but her presentation tends to make the reader believe that the *liṅga* is called *liṅga* for reasons other than the obvious. See also n. 34.

plained that the object called *liṅga* is in truth the infinite pillar of light which was revealed to Brahmā and Viṣṇu: how then could it be likened to a phallus?[5] And others still will observe that the Vedic post (*yūpa*) is definitely not a phallic emblem, but an image of the *axis mundi*, and that our *liṅga*, which probably derives from it[6], is to be seen in the same light. Underlying all these arguments, and occasionally clearly expressed, is the feeling that to think of a *liṅga* as a sexual organ is a scandalous disparagement of a sacred object of worship. Nor has this criticism been voiced by Hindus alone. H. H. Wilson, for instance, imputes the phallic interpretation to "the impure fancies of Europeans writers"[7].

A simple answer to these objections, inspired sometimes by ignorance, sometimes by a wrong interpretation of ritual injunctions, more often by prejudice – for the Hindus of today are generally prudish – lies in the mere observation of the marks (*lakṣaṇas*) that adorn the *liṅga*. Let us first recall that the monolithic shaft called *liṅga* is divided into three sections. The lower one, roughly cubic and called *rudrabhāga*, will be set in the central cavity of a

One may cite, in the same vein, the *nirukti* analysis of the word in *Kiraṇa*, *caryāpāda*, 21.2: *layaṃ gacchanti bhūtāni saṃhāre nikhilāny ataḥ / tena liṅgam iti proktaṃ sūkṣmatvāt liṅgam ucyate //* But we must not be mistaken: the *Kiraṇa* does no give these lines as expressing its whole understanding of the *liṅga*; for elsewhere it describes and regards the object exactly as all other Āgamas do.

[5] The denial is sometimes limited to a certain part of India. See for instance K. R. Srinivasam; *Some Aspects of Religion as revealed by early Monuments and Literature of the South*, University of Madras, 1960, p. 62. The author studies the concept of the *liṅga* in the Tamil country in the periods of the Nayaṇmars, and concludes with the affirmation that the early *liṅgas* of that region (unlike those of some neighbouring countries), were "totally devoid of phallic and fertility associations"; and that "the concept of the *liṅga*, as well as its form, was purely a symbol of a cosmic pillar of fire and light".

[6] Or from a certain wooden post (*kandu*) representing a god in ancient times: see K. R. Srinivasam, *loc. cit.*

[7] H. H. Wilson, Introduction to the translation of *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, p. lxix; quoted by H. K. Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, (new ed.) Delhi 1974, p. 73.

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big stone, the *brahmaśilā*, itself buried into the ground; the middle one, an eight-sided prism called *viṣṇubhāga*, will be entirely cancelled by the "pedestal" (*pīṭha*), that envelops it once it is set on the *brahmaśilā*[8]; while the upper one, roughly cylindrical and called *rudrabhāga* or *pūjābhāga*, will project out of it (see fig. 1).

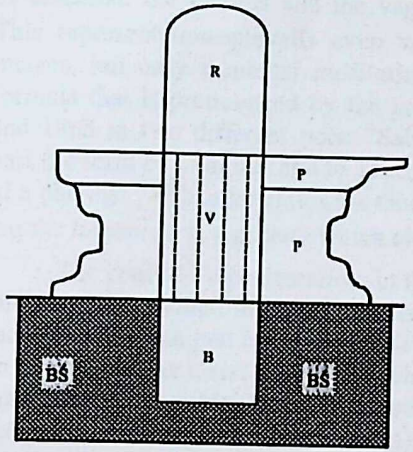

Fig. 1: Longitudinal section of a liṅga already set in place (R = *rudrabhāga*, V = *viṣṇubhāga*, B = *brahmabhāga*, P = *piṇḍikā* with its outlet, P = *pīṭha* proper, P+p = *pīṭha* in common parlance, BŚ = *brahmaśilā*)

It is on this *rudrabhāga*, the only visible part of the *liṅga*, that the characteristic "marks" are incised. Many variations in details are observed, but the main features are always present: a central "canal" (*nāla*), limited by two vertical lines, deeply incised, and two side-lines (*pārśva-* or *pakṣarekhā*)[9] which form two symmetrical curves in the front before meeting at the back (see fig. 2 p. 27). These lines can be seen easily on a naked *liṅga*. But a *liṅga* under worship is most of the time covered by ornamental clothing and an accumulation of flowers, when not by a silver mask, with the result that the marks it bears cannot be perceived by onlookers. Even those among the devotees who are eventually allowed to witness the bath of the God (this depends on their status, but also on the part of India they live in) can hardly have time to see them, for the *liṅga*, when unclothed, is immediately smeared with the various substances used for its ritual bathing (*abhiṣeka*), and quickly dressed when

[8] Sometimes four intermediate stones are inserted between the *brahmaśilā* and the *pīṭha*. Details in *SP4*, ch. III, n. 65 and fig. 2.

[9] These are in some texts respectively called *brahmarekhā* and *viṣṇurekhā* (and the central feature *rudrarekhā*); but such associations with the three Gods are late, and in no way indicative of the real signification of the lines.

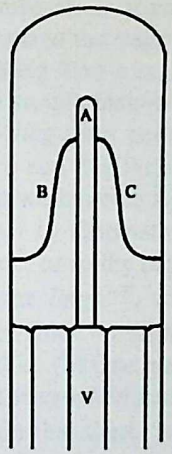

Fig. 2: Front-side of *rudrabhāga*, with its marks (A=central "canal", *rudrarekhā* in late texts; B = side-line, *brahmarekhā* in late texts; C = side-line, *viṣṇurekhā* in late texts; V = *viṣṇubhāga*)

the bath is over.

This situation may account for the general ignorance we have observed in Śaiva milieus regarding these features of the *liṅga*[10]. Nonetheless, the marks are there; they must necessarily be drawn on any immovable human-made *liṅga* before it is installed, and though they are geometrical lines[11], their aspect leaves no doubt about the model which inspires them: simply the human phallus[12]. So, the word *liṅga* when it refers to the common Śiva's emblem worshipped in temples does mean phallus. One marvels at the blindness of the persons who definitely refuse this truth, when they must know that the "pedestal" in which the *liṅga* is inserted is commonly called, not only *pīṭha* and *piṇḍikā*[13], but also *yoni*. We shall come back to this *yoni* later.

Now, this *liṅga* is of course not a idol,

[10] There are perhaps exceptions among the people who worship in places where any devotee can touch the *liṅga*, though I have not personally encountered any.

[11] For the aspects they have taken since the fifth century, see Gritli v. Mitterwallner, "The Evolution of the *liṅga*", in Meister, op. cit., pp. 13-3I, esp. fig. 9 on p. 19 (omitting the first two cases, which belong to the realistic period: see n. 12).

[12] The imitation is far better in the first known *liṅgas* (between 2nd cent. B.C. and 4th cent. A.D.), which are sometimes extremely realistic: see Meister, op. cit., Pl. 18, 19, 24. But I shall consider for my demonstration only those *liṅgas* that are closely associated with the ritual described in our texts. They may have derived from the realistic prototype by substituting incised lines for hard relief.

[13] These two words are taken as synonyms in most of the known Āgamas. But older texts, including Somaśambhu's, insist on their difference, as I have shown in *SP4*, ch. III, n. 82. The second, *piṇḍikā*, designates especially the upper part, as a rule monolithic and independent, of the whole "seat" or "pedestal" (*pīṭha*). Only this *piṇḍikā* plays a role in the ritual.

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to be worshipped for itself; it is the representation of the pure Spirit called Śiva – not only of a limited part of the body of Śiva, his *membrum virile*, but of Śiva Himself. It is Śiva. In the same way, the *pīṭha* is his Wife Herself (Umā, Gaurī, or any other name) – a statement which is repeated everywhere. But the Śaivas of old have chosen to represent the two deities in this context[14] by those parts of their anthropomorphic bodies which they conceived as essential: the phallus and the vagina as organs of creation[15]. This representation prevails even when there are no concrete images, but only a mental meditation. Here is for instance the formula that is pronounced by the priest when he worships Śiva and Umā in two different pots: "Salutation to Thee, Umā, who hast the form of a vagina, and to Thee, Śaṅkara, who hast the form of a phallus!"[16] Then he unites the God and the Goddess by showing the *liṅgamudrā*, a gesture which clearly evokes coitus[17].

The concrete representation, in the cultic image, of the *liṅga* and the *yoni* coupled in eternal coitus strictly corresponds to the mental meditation just referred to; this is probably the reason why so many Āgamas insist that the worship of Śiva in a *liṅga* is the best worship possible. When it is performed on other supports (*maṇḍalas*, water-pots, fire and so on), the imagination makes up for the absence of an eloquent material model; but apparently the Siddhāntins do not believe that this mental work suffices when the daily cult is concerned; they give the concrete support a value of its own[18].

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[14] The Goddess, when alone, is represented by a statue.

[15] It may be remembered that for the Śaivites, Śiva, supreme God, is the creator and preserver, as well as the destructor, of the world. The *liṅga* obviously expresses the cosmic function of creation.

[16] *umāyai bhagarūpiṇyai liṅgarūpadharāya ca / śaṅkarāya namas tubhyaṃ...*; quoted in *SP2*, p. 72.

[17] See *SP1*, Pl. I, *mudrā* No 19.

[18] This preference for the *liṅga* among all other possible images, which can be inferred from any description of the daily cult, is clearly expressed in many texts: see for instance *Ajitāgama*, 30.8 *sq*; *SP1*, p. 228 (where Somaśambhu déclares that the cult on a *liṅga* is *atyantam uttamam*), etc. This

I shall return later (see point 4) to the problem posed by the combination of concrete form and mentally created forms. Let us return to the *liṅga* and reflect on the logical objections to its representing Śiva's male organ raised by those who are not ignorant of the simple facts we have adduced. (a) Some persons may say that the *liṅga* has perhaps not always been worked the way we have seen and that the sexual connotation is not original. I shall answer that we have no Āgamic trace of a *liṅga* cult ignoring it, and refer them to Gopinath Rao's classical *Elements of Hindu Iconography*[19], or to the paper of Gritli v. Mitterwallner on "The Evolution of the *liṅga*"[20], which shows that the marks have been there at least since the fifth century, naturalistic *liṅgas* having existed even earlier. (b) One may also point to the existence of *liṅgas* which are not man-made and bear no mark[21]. This is true; but our texts explain that these "special" *liṅgas* do not need marks to be recognized as images of Śiva: they were spontaneously inhabited by Śiva if "natural" (*svayambhū*) or *bāṇa* [22], or made to be if installed by supernatural beings, such as gods and ṛṣis. (c) A more serious objection would consist in suggesting that *liṅgas* and *pīṭha* may be what I say them to be, but only as indicators of the generative power of Śiva when associated with His Śakti, as signs that we have not to consider otherwise than symbolically. The answer to that will be given later. (d) Finally, the fact that the *liṅga*, even if it is truly the representation of Śiva's phallus, is not perceived as such by the great majority of devotees, is sometimes produced as a proof of the "purity" of this symbol. My reply is simple: should we mistake the registration of general ignorance for the establishment of the truth ?

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choice seems to be a characteristic feature of the Siddhānta school: the Śākta schools, and even the Bhairava school of Śaivism give *maṇḍalas* or other images a higher value. I have no explanation to offer for this difference.

[19] New-York 1968, reprint of 1914 ed., 2 vol., 4 parts; vol 2, pp. 94-95 and Pl. VI, VI, X (several confusions in the note p. 94).

[20] Cited n. 11.

[21] These are the "special *liṅgas*" to which many rules given for the ordinary ones do not apply. See *SP4*, ch. II, *śl*.176-177 et notes.

[22] See *SP4*, Index.

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On all these points, the best answers will be given by the ritual. It is time to turn to it, taking successively into consideration the procedure of Installation of a *liṅga* (*liṅgapratiṣṭhā*) and the daily cult which concerns it (*liṅgapūjā*).

3. The ritual concerning the *liṅga* stresses the sexual significance of this object

a) Installation of a *liṅga*

The procedure of *pratiṣṭhā* is a very complicated one[23], of which I shall only note some salient features.

Let us first consider the definition that Somaśambhu (and many other authors) gives at the start: "The *liṅga* is Śiva, the *pīṭha* is Śakti, and the *pratiṣṭhā* is their Union, with the help of mantras." The ritual will accordingly consist, after the due preparation of the two stones (plus some others, of less importance), of the material installation and junction, in the *garbhagṛha* of the temple, of both these objects. The rite symbolizes on the material plane the Union of two spiritual Beings which takes place (or perhaps is always achieved)[24] on the metaphysical plane.

The normal procedure, necessarily followed when no concrete characteristic of one or the other of the objects prevents it, is to place the *liṅga* first, then to join the *pīṭha* – or rather the *piṇḍikā*.

We have already alluded to a phase of the preparation of the *liṅga*, namely the drawing – more rightly incision – of the lines it must bear in order to resemble a phallus, and hence, as our texts declare, to be acceptable to Śiva. An artisan will do the work; but the main officiating priest (the *ācārya*, often called *sthāpaka* in this context) first traces the lines[25] with a golden stylet, while reciting mantras. This rite, called *lakṣaṇoddhāra*, is a very solemn moment in the preparation of the *liṅga*.. Let me add that the *piṇḍikā*, which is a monolithic[26] stone ring with a superior flat surface, is also inscribed with a mark on the margin of its hole: a drawing "in the form of an *aśvattha* leaf", that is to say a *yoni*, the use of which will be clear later. We see that nothing is spared to convince us of the sexual significance of both objects.

[23] The question has been dealt with in detail in *SP4*, ch. II and III.

[24] Two visions are possible, according to the status one accepts for the Śakti involved. See *SP4*, Intr., V, 5.

[25] Theoretically. In practice he performs the rite after the lines have been incised.

A ritual preparation, which may last for several days, transforms the stone into a body (*mūrti*) of Śiva by making it, through a series of *nyāsa*, inhabited by the God and by several groups of associated divinities. In the same way, the big ring called *piṇḍikā* is ritually transformed into the body of te Goddess.

The *liṅga* is now fixed in the center of the *garbhagṛha*, at the proper time and after a noisy and colourful circumambulation of the temple precints. This is one of the peaks of the ceremony, but there is nothing special in it that bears on our problem.

It is the next phase, to wit, the junction of the *piṇḍikā* with the *liṅga*, which must hold our attention. According to the definition given above, it represents the *pratiṣṭhā* proper, that is, the Union of Śiva with the Goddess. The ritual effects their coitus: the *piṇḍikā* is first suspended just above the *liṅga*; then, at the right time, it is made to slowly descend along it, up to the moment it touches either the rest of the *pīṭha* (if this has been built separately) or the the *brahmaśilā*, referred to earlier (if *piṇḍikā* and *pīṭha* are of one piece). These latter details are of no import. What is essential to picture for oneself is the movement of the *piṇḍikā* itself, which is eloquent enough, all the more if we add that it is so done that the small vulva incised on the *piṇḍikā* glides exactly along the central mark of the *liṅga* (the "canal", limited by two vertical lines)[27]. I leave it to you to imagine the position of the partners. That of Śiva, if one wishes to complete his body, will be found unexpected – but I do no think that this consequence has even been seriously considered, at least I never came accross any discussion on the subject. That of the Goddess is of greater significance, for it gives all its meaning to the name of the closed

[26] It may have two parts, but only when very big or, according to some texts, when the *liṅga* is a *mukhaliṅga*. See *SP4*, ch. I, [2a].

[27] Details and references in *SP4*, ch. III, nn. 82 et 86.

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room where the *liṅga* is standing (and verily should not be seen): *garbhagṛha*, "house of the embryo"[28].

The late texts omit the description of the essential gesture I have just insisted upon – they just say that the guru sets the *pīṭha* in place – while they give a huge importance to the material junction of the stones, which has no ritual meaning[29]. But almost all texts, after the bath which follows immediately the Junction, demand that the *guru* show the *liṅgamudrā*, a gesture which we have already met and which clearly expresses the significance of the preceding ritual, and even duplicates it.

Let us insist on the essential result obtained from the preceding study: the *liṅga* in a temple represents Śiva coupled with his Śakti in an eternal coitus[30].

b) After the *pratiṣṭhā*

Another significant feature of the ritual is the interval of three days which stands between the *pratiṣṭhā* and the beginning

[28] The word is generally translated otherwise: either by "cella" or "sanctuary", or by "inner appartment", "inner closed room", etc. But I think that the meaning I am suggesting, and which amount to "womb", is not at all far-fetched or artificial. It is however not impossible that this inner sanctuary of a temple got initially its name through the word *garbha* understood as "closed space".

[29] See for instance *Ajitāgama*, 18.215-219; *Pūrva-Kāmikāgama*, Madras 1975, 64.154-160. Even the Āgamas less concerned with this cementing (technically called *aṣṭabandhana* from the name of the best known of the cements that may be used) are despairingly short in their description of *piṇḍikāsthāpana*: see for instance *Mataṅga-Pārameśvarāgama, kriyāpāda* 13. 40cd-41a. But this could by no means be interpreted as a different conception of the *pratiṣṭhā*; the discretion of the texts probably reflects a simplification of the procedure that has been introduced for the sake of convenience. I have been told by a temple-priest (who was fully aware that it should not be so) that the *pīṭha* is actually put in place in advance by an artisan, and the guru recites only later the mantras which are supposed to accompany the material junction. Such a deviation may have taken place long ago.

[30] Gritli v. Mitterwallner (*op. cit.*, p. 27) misunderstands the position of the *liṅga*, and naturally comes to a wrong conclusion regarding the significance of the couple formed by the *liṅga* and the *yoni*.

of the normal cult on the *liṅga*[31]. Mentioned by several handbooks and at least suggested by almost every Āgama[32], this interval is of course to be compared with the same period of three days that several works on Dharma require to pass between a human marriage and its consommation. During this period, several rites take place concerning the *liṅga*, but two features of the daily cult are missing. Firstly, there are no ablutions (*abhiṣeka*) of the *liṅga*. Secondly, and more importantly, there is no *nirmālya*[33]: flowers and other substances that have been offered to the *liṅga* during the cult are not subject to the taboos that normally restrict their handling. There is not the space here to analyze these features in detail. Let me say only that they are nowhere explained in the texts and that the only explanation that appears to me to account for them is that, though the coitus has taken place, the emission of semen is kept in check. Things are regularized, if I may say so, only on the fourth day. Then begins the usual routine, which I have now to consider.

c) Daily cult on the *liṅga*.

Il will be enough for our purpose to point to two aspects of this cult, which clearly testify to the sexual character of the *liṅga*.

First, the *abhiṣeka*. No one who has seen this rite solemnly performed in a temple can have missed the phase when milk, ghee, buttermilk and curds are poured over the *liṅga*. Now, do not these white substances irresistibly evoke the semen? When one knows that they are commonly assimilated to it in India[34], and be-

[31] Note that, once the *pratiṣṭhā* is accomplished, the word *liṅga* stands for the composite object formed by the *rudrabhāga* of the *liṅga* proper and the *pīṭha* out of which it emerges.

[32] Even when they have not mentioned the special period of three days, many of them give special instructions for "the fourth day": see *Ajitāgama* 18.277a; *Pūrva-Kāmikāgama*, Madras 1974, 64.193a.

[33] For the question of *nirmalya*, see *SP2*, pp. 266-88 and Brunner, "De la consommation du *nirmālya* de Śiva", *Journal Asiatique* (année 1969), Paris 1970, pp. 213-63.

[34] See for instance Padoux, "Le monde hindou et le sexe", *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, vol. LXXVI, 1984, p. 36.

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sides, that *abhiṣeka* must be avoided during the days when Śiva is supposed to abstain from sexual activity, one cannot doubt that what we see as "ablutions" are, at least in part, the concrete proof of this very activity. No matter if the devotees, and perhaps the priests themselves, are not aware of the fact.

Second, the rules concerning the *nirmālya*. We have already seen that for three days after the *liṅgapratiṣṭhā* "there is no *nirmālya*", as there is no *abhiṣeka*. No text forgets to mention the first of these exceptions to the normal rule, either when dealing with *pratiṣṭhā*, or with *pūjā*, or with *prāyaścitta*[35]. Now, the *nirmālya* is taboo if it comes from an immovable man-made *liṅga*. Here too I shall add that no matter if the old rule has for a long time ceased to be observed. The important thing is that there is a rule strictly prohibiting the use, and even the touching of these remnants of Śiva[36]. Why should it be so, except for the first three days, if the danger of *nirmālya* was not connected with the sexual activity of the God? It is well known from Purāṇas that the semen of Śiva is dangerous for ordinary persons; one may extend the idea to anything that has been deposited on the *liṅga*. The exceptions concerning some types of *liṅgas* do not undermine, but rather confirm, this vision – though a thorough investigation of all the cases would be demanded in order to explain exactly the reasons why this or that *liṅga* escapes the normal restrictions.

To conclude this short enquiry, I shall sum up my verdict: the immovable man-made *liṅga* in the temple represents Śiva's male organ; and the erected position of this organ does not connote seminal retention, as A. Bharati, approvingly cited by Stella Kramrisch[37] declares, but the position naturally connected with the emission of Śiva's seed into the matrix of the Goddess, that is the

[35] See *SP2*, p. 288, *śl.* 71 and n. 1.

[36] The only person to touch them is the officiating priest who has to remove them from the *liṅga* and give them to the fierce god Caṇḍa, alone susceptible to stand their impact.

[37] *The Presence of Śiva*, Princeton University Press 1981, p. 164. This vision is shared by many scholars, more than once as a result of an assumed similarity between the *liṅga* and the representations of ithyphallic Lakulīśa.

"house of the embryo", *garbhagṛha* [38]. The temple *liṅga* is, I would say, normally active, except for the first three days after the *pratiṣṭhā*. This is why its worship, or more exactly the worship of Śiva who resides in it with his Śakti, gives *bhukti* as well as *mukti* – a result much sought for by ancient Śaivas. Such a belief certainly corresponds to the opinion, expressed in many texts, that the best of *ācāryas* is the married man (the *gṛhastha*), for he only can give *bhukti* as well as *mukti*.

4. Some difficulties

Now I must be fair and state some aspects of the Śaiva ritual that might seem not to fit in the interpretation I have defended.

a) I shall first mention an important feature of the daily *pūjā*. The cult begins with the evocation (or construction) and worship of Śiva's throne, the different sections of which are "built" with mantras and projected on the material *pīṭha*. It continues with the evocation of the nine Goddesses who sit on this throne, the last and most eminent of whom, Manonmanī, is installed in the center of the lotus flower which terminates the throne and opens at the level of the *piṇḍikā*. Then comes the evocation of Śiva Himself, in the form of Sadāśiva, who sits near Manonmanī. His Form is built by an imaginative process accompanied by the recitation of mantras and projected on the *liṅga*[39]. It is to this mental image that the cult will be offered. What then, after these *dhyānas*, of the couple formed by vulva and phallus? They have simply disappeared, a fact that is stressed by Aghoraśiva, a twelfth century author, who observes, regarding the *liṅga*: *liṅgākāropamardena bhāvane liṅgatāṃ tyajet*[40]. The worship will be

[38] This is my answer to all the scholars who, while admitting the phallic nature of the *liṅga*, refuse to recognize the erotic in the symbol. This is perhaps the place to mention the curious argumentation of Doris M. Srinivasam (*op. cit.*, p. 42): observing that *liṅgas* in temples are given names resembling name of persons, but lacking the key to decipher them, this scholar wrongly concludes that these names "tend to negate the erotic element". (For the naming of a *liṅga*, see *SP4*, ch. III, n. 115.)

[39] See *SP1*, pp. 154-184.

[40] Quoted in *SP1*, p. 179, under [57c]. This remark implies that the *dhyāna* enjoined before is a constructive process, resulting in the creation of

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carried out by visualizing Sadāśiva alone; the concrete image is forgotten. And the rule holds good for any divinity, regardless of the concrete form which serves as support for its worship. Now, does this fact suffice to demolish my demonstration? I don't think so. The Form that one has to worship is given a human-like aspect in order that the worshipper faces a Being to whom the "services" (*upacāras*) he has now to offer are appropriate: washing the feet, giving water to drink, bathing, clothing and the like are actions usually performed for men, not for stones. Besides – and this may be important – this *dhyāna* is the occasion when this worshipper can chose, among the various aspects that the God may assume, the one which corresponds to the actions that he will demand of Him. For the transcendent Śiva who resides in the *liṅga* takes any Form that suits his devotee: the Form called "common", that is to say the white Sadāśiva, if the cult is performed without any specific aim; a special one in the opposite case[41], to wit the case of a *sādhaka*[42]. So, it is normal for the worshipper, at this stage of the *pūjā*, to extract from the *liṅga*, if I may say so, the God who lies there, with the aspect he wishes Him to take. Exactly the same would be done if the cult had been made on another image (a *maṇḍala*, a pot, the fire, etc.). Let us note that it would be an error to conclude from the importance of *dhyāna* that the nature of the concrete image is irrelevant. Though it disappears to the mental eyes of the worshipper, it is still there, with its specific virtues;

an object (Sadāśiva) that must must appear to be as "real" as the material image of the God – and even more so, since it cancels it.

[41] See *Mṛgendāgama*, *kriyāpāda*, 3. 40-49; trad. Brunner pp. 63-70 (but the first line of p. 69 is faulty).

[42] The *sādhaka* is, among the initiated devotees, one who intensely worships a special form of Śiva (or of another god) in order to acquire superhuman powers and live in bliss wherever he (or she) wishes and as long as he (or she) wishes. I must perhaps repeat here what I am at pain to make scholars accept: that the installation of immovable *liṅgas* is not restricted to the temples where what we call "public worship" is conducted. It was the best image for the private cult of the *sādhaka*; and most of the rules that govern its installation and worship are actually given in the older treatises with this context in view. See for instance *Mataṅga-Pārameśvarāgama, kriyāpāda* 13.1-2; *Kiraṇāgama*, Devakoṭṭai, 1932 (car. *grantha*), *caryāpāda*, 21, *passim*.

and we have seen that those of the *liṅga*, linked, as seen earlier, with its sexual symbolism, are the best.

b) Another difficulty may come from the fact that Purāṇas and local myths speak of *liṅgas* representing earth, water etc., whose existence might seem to deny our vision of the common *liṅgas*. All I can say is that these *bhūtaliṅgas*, as they are sometimes called, are not under the Āgamic jurisdiction, of which alone I am speaking. If a certain Āgama mentions them, the section is undoubtedly late – at least, such is my conviction.

c) More serious perhaps is the fact that other gods than Śiva, and even Goddesses, may exceptionnally be represented by *liṅgas*. Here too, I shall say that we are outside the Āgamic domain. The word *liṅga* may well signify "sign" in this last case; but my study concerns the *śivaliṅga* only – more exactly the immovable *śivaliṅga* of the temple, the most common and most reverred image of Śiva.

d) Finally, I should perhaps come back on the difficulties I have alluded to at the beginning, namely, the present ignorance of most Śaivas regarding the nature of the *liṅga* and the character of its cult, not in order simply to register it and accept that the vision of these modern devotees should henceforth be considered the truth, but to try to explain the loss of the ancient knowledge. I believe that the present ignorance and the various deviations that we may observe in the practice of ritual have the same origin: the transformation of a cult first meant for initiated persons only, and mostly for *sādhakas*, first into a cult accessible to all, including *gṛhasthas*[43]; and finally into a cult performed by a body of specialists for the sake of a vast community – that which we call "public worship". The *sādhakas* acted for themselves, with definite aims in view; they devoted all their time and energy to the worship of

[43] One will find here an echo of the observations that Alexis Sanderson has developped on several occasions. See for instance "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions", *The World's Religions*, Routledge, London 1988 [pp. 660-704], p. 691 sq. Adjustments of a different type, but similarly motivated by the desire to widen the circle of affiliated persons, are mentioned in his "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir", *The Category of the Person*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, [pp. 190-216], p. 203.

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their chosen deity and took it very seriously; they knew exactly what a *liṅga* stood for, how it was installed, how it had to be worshipped, and so on. This knowledge was no doubt partly lost when less involved persons took to the same cult. It is now preserved only (with a few exceptions)[44] by the body of officiating priests in temples who, like many officials, are too often little concerned with what they do. If they still know the sequence of the daily cult, and some of them the main phases of a *pratiṣṭhā*, they are mainly attached to the external actions prescribed by the ritual, and certainly never pause to understand their inner meaning. The late Āgamas, and still more the late handbooks, already betray this attitude. It is no wonder in these conditions that the ordinary devotees should know almost nothing about the rituals they passively attend. They are not to be blamed; but there is no reason for scholars to accept their misconceptions.

5. Two remarks in guise of conclusion

(a) Concerning the worshipper: these, to me evident, sexual connotations of the *liṅga* morphology and of its cult are in no way in contradiction with the conception of Śiva as a transcendent God, omniscient and omnipotent, full of grace, and capable of inducing respect, reverence and love in his devotees. Neither are they opposed to an unselfish attitude in the devotee's mind, who may worship a *liṅga* with a high purpose in view – though, if he solely aims at liberation, that is, if he is a true *mumukṣu*, he will certainly not instal one for himself[45], as will a *sādhaka*.

(b) Concerning the nature of the Saiddhāntika school of

[44] Exceptions in two senses. First, positive: there are still living persons who have received *dīkṣā* and worship a *liṅga* (but a movable one). Second, negative: even the best "specialists" in the temples have inherited only a fragment of the old knowledge, some in fact a very tiny one.

[45] Or rather have one installed by an *ācārya*, for this concerns the initiate called *putraka* (see *SP3*, Index) who is not empowered to make a *pratiṣṭhā*. The late Āgamas and handbooks suggest that he is given a movable *liṅga* for his private cult – a *liṅga* that naturally must be ritually installed. Many details of the cult concerning this movable object seem however to point to its late introduction within the Śaiva ritual. The question is not easy and would need more research for a firm conclusion to de drawn.

Śaivism: the sexual aspects that I have put forward are in keeping with its inclusion among the Tantric schools[46], though they are definitely not the reason for this inclusion. Some other features are more significant: the classification of Tantras, which goes back to a fairly old age and that one cannot ignore; the form of mantras, which are not Vedic; the insistence on *bhāvanā*; the enormous role played by *nyāsas*; the number of *tattvas*, etc. It was however perhaps not useless to insist on this sexual aspect, which one is too ready to lend to more extreme schools, and show in this way that the gap between Siddhānta on the one hand, and all the other Śaiva and Śākta schools on the other hand, is not as wide as many people think[47].

[46] An inclusion which is never objected to when one deals with classifications, but very often forgotten as soon as one tries to characterize the Tantric schools, and especially their ontology. See for instance Padoux, article "Tantrism" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade ed. in chief, New-York1986, p. 277, col. 2: the presentation of Tantric cosmogony that we read there does not apply to the Siddhānta school.

[47] A point often insisted upon by Alexis Sanderson. See n. 1. One would arrive at the same conclusion by taking into consideration the activities that the Saiddhāntikāgamas ascribe to *sādhakas* after they have obtained the powers they sought, and that are also commonly associated with extreme schools.

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